

## Islands To Look Forward To

There are many important elements to a successful recovery. Structure is important. Scheduling is important. Balance is important. Your recovery works because you work at it. Amid the hard work and the structure of recovery, do you feel as if something is missing? The activities and routines of recovery can seem stifling. Do you feel that you need to take a break from the routine and get excited about something?

The emotional flatness you experience during recovery may be explained by the following:

- Many people feel particularly bored and tired 2 to 4 months into recovery (during the period known as the Wall).
- The recovery process the body is going through may prevent you from feeling strong emotions of any kind.
- Life feels less “on the edge” than it did when you were using.

Planning enjoyable things to look forward to is one way to put a sense of anticipation and excitement into your life. Some people think of this as building islands of rest, recreation, or fun. These are islands to look forward to so that the future doesn't seem so predictable and routine. The islands don't need to be extravagant things. They can be things like

- Going out of town for a 3-day weekend
- Taking a day off work
- Going to a play or a concert
- Attending a sporting event
- Visiting relatives
- Going out to eat



## Looking Forward; Managing Downtime

- Visiting an old friend
- Having a special date with your partner



Plan these little rewards often enough so that you don't get too stressed, tired, or bored in between them.

List some islands that you used to use as rewards. \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some possible islands for you now? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Handling Downtime

### The Problem

Being in recovery means living responsibly. Always acting intelligently and constantly guarding against relapse can be exhausting. It is easy to run out of energy and become tired and bitter. Life can become a cycle of sameness: getting up, going to work, coming home, lying on the couch, going to bed, and then doing it again the next day. People in recovery who allow themselves to get to this state of boredom and exhaustion are very vulnerable to relapse. It is difficult to resist triggers and relapse justifications when your energy level is so low.

### The Old Answer

Drugs and alcohol provided quick relief from boredom and listlessness. All the reasons for not using substances can be forgotten quickly when the body and mind desperately need refueling.



## A New Answer

Each person needs to decide what can replace substance use and provide a refreshing, satisfying break from the daily grind. What works for you may not work for someone else. It doesn't matter what nonusing activities you pursue during your downtime, but it is necessary to find a way to relax and rejuvenate. The more tired and beaten down you become, the less energy you will have for staying smart and committed to recovery.

Notice how often you feel stressed, impatient, angry, or closed off emotionally. These are signs of needing more downtime. **Which activities listed below would help rejuvenate you?**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a class                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the movies          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing team sports                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meditating or doing yoga               | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycling                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Knitting                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Painting, drawing                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playing with a pet                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercising at the gym                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Scrapbooking                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming active in a church            | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Window shopping              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking with a friend who does not use | <input type="checkbox"/> Going to 12-Step or mutual-help meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Playing a musical instrument |

On a day when you're stressed and you realize that in the past you would have said, "I really need a drink" or "I need to get high today," what will you do now? What will you do in your downtime?

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